



**Testimony in Support of SB 763, AN ACT
CONCERNING WORKERS' COMPENSATION
COVERAGE FOR POLICE OFFICERS, FIREFIGHTERS
AND EMERGENCY MEDICAL TECHNICIANS WITH
POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER**

**Submitted by Officer Gilberto DelValle, Feb. 16, 2017
before the Public Safety Committee**

Good morning Chairmen Larson, Guglielmo and Verrengia, and members of the Public Safety Committee. My name is Officer Gilberto DelValle. I have served on the Bridgeport Police Department for nearly 24 years. I am also a member of AFSCME Local 1159, representing the dedicated officers of the Bridgeport PD.

I am here today to speak in favor of Proposed Senate Bill 763, which would make post-traumatic stress disorder compensable under Connecticut workers' compensation law.

This bill is needed to help first responders in those rare circumstances where answering the call of duty leads to a real and legitimate situation of PTSD.

I want to emphasize that I am not here to demand this benefit for myself. I am here to ask your help in building a stronger safety net than currently exists for those who are sworn to protect and to serve.

However, I do want to share my experience with you. In December 2001, I responded to a call regarding suspicious activity at a residence in Bridgeport. The case turned out to be a home invasion and jewelry robbery. As the responding officer, I was met at the door by a 300-pound man wielding an assault rifle. He immediately opened fire on me. I literally felt the bullets passing to either side of me. One bullet ricocheted off the door behind me and hit my side. I returned fire and unfortunately killed the suspect.

I am still haunted by visions of the shooting to this day. I saw a counselor through our employer's EAP, but I'm not sure that was enough. Perhaps I would have benefited from more intensive treatment. Perhaps I needed to take a short medical leave of absence so I could return to the job I love in a better place emotionally.

As police officers, we know what we signed up for. We know that our jobs present the risk of violence, injury and trauma on a daily basis. But there are certain circumstances, rare circumstances, when we need more than an EAP program or an employer-recommended therapist. PTSD is a serious illness and if left unchecked, can destroy our lives and our livelihoods.

Just ask those who responded to the Sandy Hook tragedy in Newtown. They were largely left to fend for themselves until the legislature created a special fund unique to the first responders who answered the call of duty that dark day in December 2012.

I thank you for raising SB 763 and urge you to support the men and women in blue by transforming this proposal into law.

I appreciate your hearing my testimony and would be happy to answer any questions.